

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 NIC-01 DRC-01 /118 W

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P R 031300Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4963

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAGUA 3408

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (SECTION INFO)

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, NU

SUBJECT: ELECTIONS 1974: A LOOK AT THE CAMPAIGN DURING THE
WEEK BEFORE ELECTION DAY

REF: MANAGUA 3185.

1. SUMMARY: AFTER ALMOST A YEAR OF ELECTIONEERING, THE 1974
ELECTIONS ARE EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE PEACEFULLY ON SEPTEMBER 1.
GENERAL ANASTASIO SOMOZA WILL INEVITABLY WIN A SIX YEAR TERM AS
PRESIDENT WITH HIS INAUGURATION TO TAKE PLACE ON DECEMBER 1.
AUGUST 25, THE LAST SUNDAY OF OFFICIAL CAMPAIGNING, SAW
CONSERVATIVE (PCN-P) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE EDMUNDO PAGUAGA
CONCLUDING HIS POORLY ORGANIZED, ILL-FINANCED AND LIGHTLY ATTENDED
CAMPAGIN WITH A RALLY IN MATAGALPA. GENERAL SOMOZA'S RALLY IN
MANAGUA WAS A MONSTROUS AFFAIR ATTENDED BY PERHAPS 100,000
PEOPLE. WHILE THE OFFICIAL CANDIDATES WERE ADDRESSING OPEN AIR
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RALLIES, THE OPPOSITION GROUPS CALLING FOR A BOYCOTT OF THE

ELECTIONS WERE ALSO ACTIVE. DESPITE THE FACT THAT THEIR RIGHT TO ASSEMBLE HAS PRESUMEDLY BEEN LIFTED WITH THE REJECTION OF THEIR APPEAL OF AN ORDER TO SUSPEND THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS, MANY OF THE CELEBRATED TWENTY-SEVEN MET IN GRANADA IN A FURTHER EFFORT TO FORGE A UNITED OPPOSITION ORGANIZATION. DISSIDENT CONSERVATIVE LEADER FERNANDO AGUERO WHO LIKEWISE PREACHES ABSTENTION ALSO HELD A POLITICAL MEETING IN BOACO ON AUGUST 25 WHERE HE INDICATED THAT HE WAS ABOUT READY TO JOIN FORCES WITH THE TWENTY-SEVEN. THE ISSUE OF ABSTENTION HAS DOMINATED THE LAST WEEKS OF THE ELECTION, AND HAS SERVED TO UNITE DISPARATE ANTI-SOMOZA FORCES. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF AFTER THE ELECTION THE MOMENTUM TOWARD OPPOSITION UNITY CAN BE SUSTAINED. IF THE ABSTAINING GROUPS, HOWEVER, DO COALESCE INTO SOME KIND OF UNITED OPPOSITION FRONT, ESPECIALLY IF IT INCLUDES THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PSN) AND ITS POWERFUL LABOR MOVEMENT, THIS COULD EMERGE AS THE MAJOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE 1974 ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. NATIONAL ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD IN NICARAGUA SEPTEMBER 1 ENDING ALMOST A YEAR OF OFFICIAL AND UNOFFICIAL CAMPAIGNING. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NATURALLY SOME TENSION, ELECTION DAY APPROACHES WITH NO INDICATION THAT IT WILL BE DISRUPTED BY VIOLENCE AS HAD HAPPENED IN THE PAST WHEN NICARAGUANS HAVE GONE TO THE POLLS. THE RELATIVELY CALM ATMOSPHERE IS LARGELY DUE TO THE AMIABLE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES ON THE BALLOT. THIS SUNDAY VOTERS WILL SIMPLY CONFIRM A PRIOR ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO CONTESTANTS. THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY (PCN-P) LED BY ITS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE EDMUNDO PAGUAGA IRIAS WILL CONTENTEDLY ACCEPT MINORITY PARTY STATUS WHICH BRINGS WITH IT FORTY PERCENT OF THE CONGRESSIONAL SEATS. GENERAL ANASTASIO SOMOZA DEBAYLE, AT THE HEAD OF THE MAJORITY LIBERAL PARTY (PLN), WILL BE TRIUMPHANTLY ELEVATED FROM HIS POSITION AS THE UNQUESTIONED DE-FACTO RULER OF NICARAGUA TO A SIX YEAR TERM AS CONSTITUTIONALLY ELECTED PRESIDENT -- PROBABLY BY A MARGIN OF ABOUT 80 PERCENT OF THE OFFICIAL RETURNS. HIS NEW GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE OFFICE DECEMBER 1.

3. WHILE PAGUAGA HELD FORTH IN MATAGALPA, SOMOZA CONCLUDED HIS CAMPAIGN WITH A GIGANTIC, GRAND FINALE OF A POLITICAL RALLY IN MANAGUA. ALTHOUGH THE PLN ESTIMATE OF 250,000 FOR THE CROWD SIZE IS EXCESSIVE IT IS CERTAINLY POSSIBLE THAT THE ELABORATELY PLANNED AND VERY WELL FINANCED GATHERING HAD AS MANY AS 100,000

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ATTENDING. THE MANAGUA RALLY WAS A MASSIVE DEMONSTRATION OF THE POWER AND RESOURCES OF GENERAL SOMOZA'S PLN, BUT IT WAS PLAGUED AS HAVE BEEN ALL POLITICAL RALLIES OF BOTH CANDIDATES BY AN OBVIOUS LACK OF ENTHUSIASM BY THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THOSE PRESENT. THERE HAS BEEN VERY LITTLE TO GET EXCITED ABOUT IN THE RACE BETWEEN PAGUAGA AND GENERAL SOMOZA -- PAGUAGA'S FAILURE TO PRESENT HIMSELF AS A CREDIBLE ADVERSARY MADE IT OVERALL A DULL AFFAIR.

4. WITH THE OFFICIAL CANDIDATES SCRUPULOUSLY AVOIDING ATTACK ON EACH OTHER, THE MAIN ISSUE OF THE ELECTION -- THE LEGITIMACY OF THE ELECTION ITSELF -- WAS DEVELOPED BY OPPOSITION GROUPS WHO CONTEND THAT THEY WERE FROZEN OUT OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. BOTH THE PLN AND THE PCN-P HAVE IN THE LAST MONTH OF THE CAMPAIGN DIRECTED THEIR PRINCIPAL FIRE AGAINST THE TWENTY-SEVEN ABSTENTIONISTS, LEADERS OF NINE OPPOSITION GROUPS, WHO TOOK AS THEIR BATTLE CRY "THERE IS NO ONE TO VOTE FOR." INDICATIVE OF HOW THE TWENTY-SEVEN'S ACTIVITIES TO ENCOURAGE A BOYCOTT OF THE ELECTION CAME TO DOMINATE THE LAST DAYS OF THE ELECTION WAS USE OF THE PHRASE -- YES, THERE IS SOMEONE TO VOTE FOR, GENERAL SOMOZA -- AS THE MOST POPULAR SLOGAN OF THE SOMOZA CAMPAIGN.

5. WITH A NEUTRALIZED OPPONENT, HAPPY TO BE SECOND BEST, THE ONLY SEMBLANCE OF A THREAT TO GENERAL SOMOZA'S PRESIDENTIAL MANDATE WAS THE POSSIBILITY THAT PEOPLE SIMPLY WOULD NOT VOTE. IN CONTENDING WITH THIS THREAT, THE GON'S LEGAL OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE TWENTY-SEVEN HAS TWO COUNTERPRODUCTIVE RESULTS. THE

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4964

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MANAGUA 3408

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

PUBLIC TRIAL OF THE TWENTY-SEVEN ON CHARGES OF VIOLATING THE

CONSTITUTION BY PROCLAIMING ABSTENTION GAVE THE NINE OPPOSITION GROUPS INVOLVED AN OPPORTUNITY TO WIDELY PUBLICIZE THEIR POSITION TO A NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT, IN THE FACE OF GON PRESSURE, THESE GROUPS, WHICH INCLUDE THE MOST DETERMINED ANTI-SOMOZA FORCES IN NICARAGUA, AMONG THEM THE COMMUNIST PARTY (PSN) AND ITS POWERFUL LABOR MOVEMENT, HAVE PROGRESSIVELY MOVED TOWARD FORMALIZING THEIR LOOSE ALLIANCE INTO A UNITED FRONT. WHILE GENERAL SOMOZA WAS SPEAKING IN MANAGUA ON AUGUST 25, SEVERAL OF THE TWENTY-SEVEN AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE NINE GROUPS THEY REPRESENT MET IN GRANADA IN ANOTHER STEP TOWARD

FORMING A UNITED OPPOSITION LEADERSHIP.

6. THE MEETING IN GRANADA TOOK PLACE DESPITE FORMAL REJECTION THE DAY BEFORE BY THE POLITICAL CHIEF OF MANAGUA OF THE TWENTY-SEVEN'S APPEAL OF A POLICE JUDGE'S ORDER THAT THEIR RIGHTS BE SUEPENDED. ALTHOUGH THE COURT HAS STILL NOT DEFINED WHAT RIGHTS ARE AFFECTED, PRESUMEDLY THE SENTENCE INCLUDES SUSPENSION OF THE RIGHT OF CONFIDENTIAL

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ASSEMBLY. THE FACT THAT THE GON HAS NOT TAKEN FURTHER LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THOSE OF THE TWENTY-SEVEN ATTENDING THE GRANADA MEETING INDICATES THAT IN ORDER TO AVOID FURTHER CONFRONTATION THE GON IS PREPARED AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTION TO LEAVE THE SUSPENSION OF RIGHTS SENTENCE UNENFORCED. MEANWHILE THE TWENTY-SEVEN ARE PREPARING THEIR REQUEST FOR AN INJUNCTION FROM THE SUPREME COURT DECLARING THE SENTENCE ILLEGAL. IT IS SAFE TO ASSUME THAT THE SUPREME COURT, COMPOSED OF NEW SOMOZA AND PAGUAGA APPOINTEES, WILL REFUSE TO ISSUE SUCH AN INJUNCTION, AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE POLITICAL CHIEF'S RULING THE SUEPENSION OF RIGHTS SENTENCE WHICH BEGAN AUGUST 24 WILL BE IN EFFECT FOR SIX MONTHS. ALTHOUGH THE GON APPEARS DISPOSED TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY FOR THE TIME BEING, IF DURING THIS SIX MONTH PERIOD ANY OF THE TWENTY-SEVEN'S ACTIVITIES BECOME TOO MUCH OF AN IRRITANT THE GOVERNMENT WILL HOLD THIS LEGAL WEAPON IN RESERVE.

7. YET ANOTHER POLITICAL MEETING HELD ON SUNDAY, AUGUST 25 MAY ALSO PROVE SIGNIFICANT. CHARISMATIC CONSERVATIVE LEADER FERNANDO AGUERO, DISPLACED BY EDMUNDO PAGUAGA AS THE CONSERVATIVE MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNING COUNCIL BUT STILL POLITICALLY AIOIVE, HELD A MEETING IN BOACO. AT THAT RALLY, ACCORDING TO SOME RADIO REPORTS ATTENDED BY 3,000 PEOPLE, AGUERO SENT OUT CLEAR SIGNALS THAT HE WAS ABOUT READY TO JOIN FORCES WITH THE TWENTY-SEVEN. AGUERO JOINED IN THE ABSTENTION CAMPAIGN WITH HIS OWN PUBLIC DECLARATION AND SOME OF HIS FOLLOWERS HAVE BEEN MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH THE TWENTY-SEVEN. FOR INSTANCE, THE POLITICAL SECRETARY OF AGUERO'S CONSERVATIVE PARTY FACTION VOLUNTEERED HIS LEGAL SERVICES TO THE GROUP AND WAS ASSIGNED TO DEFEND COMMUNIST LABOR LEADER DOMINGO "CHAGUITILLO" SANCHEZ SALGADO.

8. COMMENT: IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE DISPARATE
OPPOSITION GROUPS UNITED OVER THE ABSTENTION ISSUE CAN CONTINUE
TO PULL TOGETHER AFTER THE STIMULATING ATMOSPHERE OF THE ELECTION HAS
PASSED AND NICARAGUANS BEGIN TO THINK LESS ABOUT POLITICS. DESPITE
THEIR CONFLUENCE OF INTERESTS AT PRESENT, IT WILL BE ESPECIALLY
DIFFICULT TO BRING FERNANDO AGUERO INTO THE TWENTY-SEVEN'S FOLD--
GRUDGES HELD AGAINST HIM BY MANY IN THIS CAMP HAVE VERY DEEP
ROOTS. IF THE ABSTAINING OPPOSITION DOES, HOWEVER, COALESCE--
ESPECIALLY IF IT CONTINUES TO HAVE COMMUNIST SUPPORT-- THIS COULD
BE THE MAJOR DEVELOPMENT TO COME OUT OF THE 1974 ELECTION.
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